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at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

1. The CHAIRMAN informed the members of the Committee that he had received a number of communications containing requests for hearings on agenda item 19 concerning New Caledonia (A/C.4/51/4/Add.1) and Western Sahara (A/C.4/51/5/Add.4-8). He took it that the Committee wished to grant those requests.

2. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 19: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/51/23 (Part II, chap. III and IV, Part V, chap. IX, Part VI, chap. X, and Part VII, chap. X) and A/51/428; A/AC.109/2041 and Corr.1, 2043, 2044 and Add.1, 2045, 2046, 2047 and Add.1, 2049 and Corr.1-2, 2050-2053, 2054 and Add.1, and 2055-2059; S/1996/43 and Corr.1, 343 and 674)

Hearing of petitioners

Question of New Caledonia (A/C.4/51/4/Add.1)

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Wamytan (Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste) took a place at the petitioners' table.

4. Mr. WAMYTAN (Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste (FLNKS)) said that the situation in New Caledonia was being considered in the Fourth Committee for the tenth successive year. It was a well-known fact that in recent years the world had undergone important political and geopolitical changes which had had an impact on the attitude of certain countries towards decolonization. It should be pointed out, however, that the maintenance of the monitoring mechanisms and the implementation of the principles and procedures in the field of decolonization were of major significance for small non-self-governing peoples. The reaffirmation of the right of peoples to self-determination and independence, proclaimed in General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and 1541 (XV) of 15 December 1960, through the declaration of the period 1990-2000 as the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and the period 1995-2005 as the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People was, for the Kanak people and other indigenous peoples who were in a minority in their own country, a guarantee of protection against domination and oppression by the major imperialist Powers, and consequently of the right to liberty, dignity, sovereignty and independence.

5. In the course of their struggle, the Kanak people had always sought the best political compromise, since the alignment of forces did not give it the choice of means to assert its rights to freedom and emancipation. The Matignon Accords concluded in 1988 were made possible not because France had suddenly discovered a desire for decolonization, but as a result of the self-sacrificing struggle of the Kanak people, who, in 1984 and 1988, had rebelled against the

policies of the French Government. It should be noted that the French Government had always disregarded the claims of the Kanak people to its lands and rights, each time citing laws and regulations that only the French could understand. By agreeing to sign the Matignon Accords in 1988, FLNKS had accepted a new challenge, convinced that the plan would help to create conditions which would allow the three partners in the Accords, including France as the administering Power, to bring the process of decolonization to a successful conclusion. During the negotiations which had preceded the adoption of that plan, FLNKS had asked the French Government to take measures which would place New Caledonia in an irreversible process of decolonization that would in the end lead to the full emancipation of the Kanak people.

6. As the time approached for the referendum on the question of self-determination, which was to be held in 1998, it should be noted that, over the past 10 years progress had undeniably been made. The political, technical and financial means made available for development under the Matignon Accords had, for the first time, met the expectations of the Kanak people, who lived for the most part in rural areas and on reservations.

7. While significant results had been achieved in the implementation of the plan, obstacles had been encountered. Over the years, FLNKS and the progressive forces had been unable to mobilize all the political partners in the struggle for the elimination of the imbalances inherent in the colonial system in New Caledonia because of the conservatism of the local right wing, backed by the ultra-conservatism of the French Government. Eight years after the signing of the Matignon Accords, there was still no solution to the fundamental problem, which was the transformation of New Caledonia from a materially dependent State with a trading economy into a State on the true path to development which would realize its potential and create conditions for greater economic and financial self-sufficiency. That would involve a reform of the current fiscal system to ensure that the wealth created locally was used to finance the development of the country. It called for a change in mentality and for citizens of the country to be made responsible for their own development. It also implied a redirection of public resources to development objectives. Public and private funds tended to fall into the hands of a privileged business class that was particularly influential in South Province, which was run by the Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR).

8. The exploitation of natural resources, in particular nickel, was the principal economic activity of the country. Despite the fact that the country had 30 per cent of the world's known nickel reserves, its share of the world's semi-finished product was only about 6 per cent. The added value of the metallurgical processing of nickel was totally lost to New Caledonia and was in the hands of foreign companies. For that reason, the Société Minière du Sud Pacifique had developed and submitted to the Prime Minister of France a plan for the construction of a metallurgical plant in the northern part of the country. That plan was currently destabilized because French big business was doing everything possible to prevent the French Prime Minister from fulfilling his commitments.

9. In the social sphere, several reforms still remained to be implemented, in particular in the field of labour legislation and social welfare. The

involvement of the inhabitants of the country, in particular the Kanaks, in economic and social life was one of the priorities. For a long time, the Kanaks had been excluded from the decision-making process and from exercising responsible functions; that ethnic imbalance needed to be rectified rapidly.

10. Special attention should be paid to the question of immigration from metropolitan France and other European countries. The results of the most recent census, published the preceding month, showed that the population of New Caledonia had increased between 1989 and 1996, reflecting, inter alia, the immigration of 15,000 persons from metropolitan France. That situation was fraught with very serious consequences, since the immigrants were able to vote and could form pressure groups to influence the outcome of the 1998 referendum. Moreover, in the economic and social spheres, those categories of immigrants took jobs, thereby accentuating the phenomena of social exclusion and marginalization, the victims of which were the country's indigenous inhabitants, especially Kanak young people.

11. As to the land ownership question, a number of clans and tribes had been able to increase their land holdings and recover ancestral lands as a result of land reforms carried out between 1978 and 1996. Nevertheless, per capita land holdings in rural areas were twice as large for Europeans as for Kanaks, whose average holding was about 500 hectares. FLNKS continued to demand that the French authorities take the necessary measures to allow land reform to go forward.

12. France had stated in various international forums since 1988 that the decolonization of New Caledonia was proceeding on the basis of the Matignon Accords. That assertion was, however, fraudulent. To date no irreversible process had been initiated. The only solution that would provide political stability was for New Caledonia to accede to the status of a sovereign and independent State. That conviction was shared by the Kanak people not only because accession to independence and sovereignty would enable it to re-establish the continuity of its history, but also because it was the only way to guarantee political and institutional stability, which was the necessary condition for lasting economic and social development.

13. It should be brought to the Committee's attention that France was persisting in its refusal to assume its historical responsibility to the Kanak people and that it was still unwilling to give the country the right to the exercise of sovereignty and independence. In the course of the negotiations between the principal signatories of the Matignon Accords which had begun on 16 February 1996 each side had presented its position. RPCR had proposed a status of autonomy and an expansion of powers over 30 years. FLNKS had advocated sovereignty and independence for New Caledonia as from 1998, with the terms and conditions to be defined. The Prime Minister of France, Alain Juppé, declared on 19 April 1996 that granting New Caledonia the status of an independent State was incompatible with the search for a solution by consensus. He had proposed a statute providing for wide autonomy and increased powers for local institutions, economic assistance and the postponement of the vote on self-determination to some unspecified future date. FLNKS had then decided to suspend its participation in the discussions with the other two signatories of the Accords, because it considered France's position to be unacceptable.

Acceptance of that proposal would, in effect, go against the wishes of the French people, who in the referendum of 9 November 1988 had encouraged the representatives of the French State to give favourable consideration both to the option of accession by the country to independence and to the alternative option. In taking that step, FLNKS had affirmed at the same time that the settlement of the dispute between the Kanak people and France and of the question of accession by New Caledonia to sovereignty and independence was moving to the search for a negotiated solution that was mutually acceptable. Two months later, the Government of France had acceded to the FLNKS demand and a new framework for negotiations had been defined giving preference in the first stage to bilateral discussions between France and FLNKS. At the centre of those discussions were the issues of the settlement of the colonial dispute and the process for the country's accession to independence. In the second stage, discussions would be widened to include RPCR and the other political forces in the country.

14. He called upon the General Assembly to lend its assistance in seeking to ensure that France discharged its historical responsibility vis-à-vis New Caledonia in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions.

15. Mr. Wamytan withdrew.

AGENDA ITEM 19: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/51/23 (Part II, chap. III and IV, Part V, chap. IX, Part VI, chap. X, and Part VII, chap. X) and A/51/428; A/AC.109/2041 and Corr.1, 2043, 2044 and Add.1, 2045, 2046, 2047 and Add.1, 2049 and Corr.1 and Corr.2, 2050-2053, 2054 and Add.1, and 2055-2059; S/1996/43 and Corr.1, S/1996/343 and 674)

AGENDA ITEM 88: INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/51/23 (Part IV, chap. VIII) and A/51/316 and Add.1)

AGENDA ITEM 89: ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH IMPEDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION (continued) (A/51/23 (Part III, chap. V and VII))

AGENDA ITEM 90: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/51/23 (Part IV, chap. VII) and A/51/212; A/AC.109/L.1853; E/1996/85)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/51/3 (chap. V, sect. A)

AGENDA ITEM 91: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (continued) (A/51/373)

16. Mr. GUANI (Uruguay) said that the overwhelming majority of Member States which had taken part in the general debate in the Committee in recent years had recognized the usefulness of visiting missions in identifying a variety of problems faced by different peoples and Territories. Particular attention should be paid at the current session to the practice of dispatching visiting missions with the aim of ensuring that the needs and wishes of the peoples concerned were taken into account in any final decisions affecting their futures.

17. On the question of New Caledonia, he expressed satisfaction at a number of positive changes that had taken place, such as improvements in the process for reviewing the Matignon Accords through more frequent coordinating meetings. Cooperation between the parties in the fields of housing construction, employment, vocational training and public health were helping to lay the foundations for the self-determination of the Territory.

18. Tokelau was a textbook example of the self-determination of a Territory. The cooperation between the administering Power, the population of the Territory and the United Nations could be described as exemplary.

19. With regard to Western Sahara, he deeply regretted the halting of the peace process initiated under the auspices of the United Nations and aimed at holding a referendum on self-determination. Uruguay affirmed its decisive support for that peace plan and its implementation on the basis of the agreed principles. The process of identification on the basis of the results of the 1974 census should be renewed. The dialogue between the parties recently begun in Rabat offered a unique opportunity for the main parties to the conflict to reach final agreement on the measures that needed to be taken to activate the process.

20. Uruguay, which maintained traditional links with Argentina and excellent relations with the United Kingdom, continued to be concerned over the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), and again called on the parties to continue the negotiating process, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on decolonization.

21. Uruguay was convinced that any decision in the field of decolonization must be accompanied by concrete efforts to ensure the stable development of the Territories receiving full autonomy. The cooperation of Member States, and especially of administering Powers, was exceptionally important in that respect, as was assistance from the specialized agencies and other organs of the United Nations system.

22. Uruguay proposed that consideration should be given to transferring the resources released as a result of the end of the decolonization process to the provision of assistance to countries that had recently attained autonomy and were encountering difficulties in the development process.

23. Mr. WILMOT (Ghana) expressed agreement with the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Committee on decolonization contained in the report on its work, and called on the administering Powers to cooperate with it in order to promote the interests of the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. He supported the Special Committee's call on the administering

Powers to continue meeting their commitments under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations regarding the regular transmission to the Secretary-General of information on the administered Territories. Such information, together with the findings of the Special Committee's special missions to those Territories, would enable it to ascertain the wishes of the people concerned and the extent to which those wishes were being promoted.

24. In the interests of international peace and security, Ghana called for peaceful negotiations between those Powers vying for control of some Non-Self-Governing Territories. At the same time, those Powers must be reminded that there was no alternative to self-determination. Therefore, the peoples of the Territories concerned had to be directly involved in any negotiations.

25. His delegation acknowledged and commended the valuable cooperation extended by the Government of New Zealand to the Special Committee. He welcomed the fact that New Zealand had declared its intention to abide by the wishes of the people of Tokelau, and expressed the hope that other administering Powers would follow that example.

26. His delegation shared the conviction of the Special Committee that military bases and installations in the Territories concerned could constitute an obstacle to the exercise by the people of those Territories of their right to self-determination. It was therefore pleased to learn from the Committee's report of the downsizing of some such bases. Ghana encouraged administering Powers with bases in Non-Self-Governing Territories to reduce them drastically with a view to their eventual withdrawal.

27. His delegation was gravely concerned at the continuing lack of progress in relation to the question of Western Sahara. The people of that Territory had to be given an opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination. Ghana's position on that question was fully in consonance with decisions of the Organization of African Unity. In its view, the settlement plan agreed to by the parties to the conflict under the auspices of the United Nations remained the best option for pursuing a long-lasting solution in the interests of the people of Western Sahara and for the sake of peace and security in the region. Ghana was concerned at the absence of any signs of the resumption of the work of the Identification Commission. It reiterated its call for continued dialogue, which was essential in order to break the stalemate, and once more called on the parties to engage in direct talks that could open the way for the continuation of the identification process.

28. Mr. BAALI (Algeria) said that the United Nations could be legitimately proud of its action and its decisive contribution to decolonization in the world. General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 had laid a doctrinal and legal foundation which had enhanced the capacity of the Organization to promote the decolonization process. It was necessary today to reaffirm the collective commitment to the full implementation of that resolution and to reiterate the particular responsibilities of the United Nations towards the colonial peoples and Territories.

29. That responsibility was of special importance in the case of Western Sahara, in view of the fact that it was precisely the United Nations that had

decided to take up the search for a just and lasting solution on the basis of the Settlement Plan adopted by the two parties to the conflict, Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO, with a view to enabling the people of Western Sahara to exercise its right to self-determination through the organization of a free, fair and impartial referendum. Despite sustained and persevering efforts, numerous problems had led to a dangerous derailment of the settlement plan. That had happened because the psychological barriers between the two parties to the conflict had not yet been removed and a climate of confidence and the political environment conducive to the establishment of the peace process had not yet been created. There was a need to organize direct talks between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO.

30. Algeria had constantly called for a peaceful solution to the conflict between the two brotherly nations of Morocco and Western Sahara as the only way of preserving peace and stability in the region. The future of the Maghreb countries could be assured only within a strong, united and homogeneous union capable of meeting the legitimate expectations of the peoples of the region. As a neighbouring country and an official observer of the implementation of the settlement plan, Algeria was acting with a high sense of responsibility to promote a climate which would facilitate the implementation of the peace plan in conditions of credibility, transparency and impartiality.

31. The international community, the Security Council and the General Assembly were called upon to take swift and determined action to safeguard the peace process. The General Assembly should use its moral and political authority to salvage the stalled peace process and to reaffirm its commitment to the strict and integral implementation of the settlement plan. The Secretary-General should call for make further efforts for the integral implementation of the settlement plan for the holding of a free and impartial referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara. The international community's efforts should aim at ensuring the continued presence of MINURSO and at providing it with all necessary means to enable it to carry out its mandate. It was beyond any doubt that the definitive solution of the problem of Western Sahara with strict respect of the right of the Saharan people to self-determination and independence would give new impetus to the construction of the Arab Maghreb Union and thereby promote the stability and concord that the region so badly needed.

32. Mr. WIRAJUDA (Indonesia) said that, despite the remarkable success achieved in the field of decolonization, the question of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories must not be overlooked. Many of those Territories were small islands with their own characteristics and problems. The fragility of their economies and ecologies made them uniquely vulnerable and demanded particular attention on the part of the administering Powers. It had always been the firm position of Indonesia that the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was equally applicable to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and the General Assembly had time and again reiterated its position that such factors as the geographical location, the territorial size, the size of the population and limited resources should not impede the exercise of the right of self-determination in those Territories.

33. In recent years it had become necessary to give priority not only to national independence and the exercise of self-determination but also to other pressing tasks such as achieving self-reliance and economic growth. In an era of globalization and interdependence there was a need to revitalize dialogue between the developed and the developing countries, on the basis of genuine interdependence, mutual interests and equitably shared responsibilities. South-South cooperation should be broadened and strengthened for the benefit of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In that regard, Indonesia was pleased to state that its technical assistance programme would be expanded and strengthened.

34. The specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system played a significant role in expediting economic and social progress in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Such assistance was an indispensable component of making peoples self-sustaining. His delegation had also taken note of the recommendations of the Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance. Its recommendations were an invaluable source of information in assisting the Special Committee on decolonization in fulfilling its mandate effectively.

35. Indonesia remained confident that fostering closer cooperation with the administering Powers could only strengthen the United Nations by enhancing the spirit of consensus and cooperation. It believed that the United Nations today more than ever played a crucial role in bringing the last remnants of colonialism to an end.

36. Mr.DOUDECH (Tunisia) said that the United Nations had achieved significant successes in the field of decolonization, as a result of which many peoples had thrown off the yoke of colonialism and exercised their right to self-determination. The Organization was justifiably proud of those successes and sought to continue them so that the peoples of the world could finally free themselves from colonialism. Since the 1950s, when decolonization had begun, the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories had changed significantly, but the principles of the freedom and self-determination of peoples had not lost their relevance. So long as colonialism persisted in whatever form, the United Nations would remain responsible for continuing its action in that sphere.

37. In that regard, a highly important role was played by the Special Committee, whose mandate had been defined by the General Assembly in resolution 1654 (XVI) of 27 November 1961. The Special Committee was required to follow political, economic and social developments in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and to report to the General Assembly on the progress achieved. Thus, the Special Committee represented a channel through which the States Members of the United Nations could obtain information on the progress of decolonization in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and, take the relevant decisions. Consequently, that body continued to play a highly important role in ensuring that the Organization maintained continuing contact with the population of those Territories. It was also important that all the relevant parties maintained relations of cooperation and trust with each other.

38. He noted, in that regard, that the petitioners wishing to address the Committee were encountering financial difficulties. His delegation considered

that that issue should receive special attention so that the relevant decision could be taken. Although the referendums represented one of the most effective forms of ascertaining the will of the peoples of the small Territories, the United Nations must not foist the holding of a referendum upon them or deprive them of the right to resort to any other legitimate means of protecting their interests. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which had the inalienable right to self-determination, in many cases preferred not to rush into a decision on their future relations with the administering Powers and sought to retain the status quo. Such an approach could be explained by the fact that any changes in the political status could cause the rupture of economic and financial links that were beneficial to the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Investment and entrepreneurship in the small Territories had enabled many of them to build a dynamic economy. Tunisia considered that the most appropriate form of obtaining information on the future political status chosen by the population of a Territory was the holding of consultations under the auspices of the United Nations and with its cooperation. Work to that end would make it possible to resolve the task facing the United Nations of eliminating colonialism by the year 2000.

39. As to the role of the Special Committee, his delegation felt that that Committee must adjust its procedures to take into account current realities, and welcomed the work which had already been done recently to rationalize procedures. In 1996 the Special Committee had included in its programme of work consideration of the proposal for the integration of the Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance with the Special Committee. That step would make it possible to avoid unnecessary duplication and achieve further rationalization of work in the spirit of the reforms taking place in the Organization.

40. Mr. NUÑEZ-MOSQUERA (Cuba) said that the decolonization process was one of the areas in which the United Nations had achieved considerable success. The work was not yet completed, however, and the fact that only three years before the end of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism there were still 17 Territories on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories should give rise to concern.

41. At the recent high-level Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Colombia, the Heads of State or Government had particularly stressed the right of peoples under colonial domination to self-determination and independence in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and had confirmed the obligation of their countries to take steps to accelerate the process leading to the complete eradication of colonialism.

42. In 1996 the Committee, despite various limitations, inadequate resources and the obstacles it faced, had done important work. One of the most significant steps taken by the Committee had been the organization of the Pacific Regional Seminar held in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. The seminar had provided an opportunity to gain firsthand information about the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and make very useful contacts with prominent figures and experts from the region. Cuba supported the idea of holding such

seminars and felt that it was necessary for the Committee to have sufficient resources for their organization. He expressed the hope that in 1997 it would be possible to hold a seminar for the Caribbean countries.

43. Another important result of the Committee's work was the enhanced quality of the resolutions submitted for adoption. In addition, mention should be made of the visiting missions sent to Non-Self-Governing Territories. Those missions were a very important mechanism for the Organization in the field of decolonization. At the Pacific Regional Seminar, the willingness of the Chamorro people to accept a visiting mission to Guam had been confirmed; it was to be hoped that the mission would be sent to the Territory in the near future.

44. One of the important items on the agenda was the item entitled "Activities of foreign economic and other interests which impede the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in Territories under colonial domination". The General Assembly had repeatedly confirmed the duty of the administering Powers to ensure the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of those Territories and to protect the human and natural resources of those Territories. Nevertheless, there were many examples which demonstrated that foreign circles were exploiting natural and human resources to the detriment of the legitimate interests of the inhabitants of those Territories. In the same context reference should be made also to military activity, including the existence of foreign military bases in those Territories, which posed a threat not only to their population, but also to international peace and security. Such bases must be eliminated.

45. Cuba noted with satisfaction the direct contacts between the representatives of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO which, it was to be hoped, would soon lead to a just settlement of the conflict in Western Sahara.

46. It should be noted that the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories did not include Puerto Rico. Cuba confirmed its support for the achievement of independence by Puerto Rico; it hoped that the United Nations would duly contribute to that process.

47. Mr. MARRERO (United States of America) said that since its founding, the United Nations had brought a full measure of self-government to hundreds of millions of people throughout the world. The United States fully supported the right of the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to self-government. In 1960 the United States had abstained in the vote on the original resolution on the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples because it reflected a narrow political agenda and did not take into account the wide variety of situations facing those Territories. Unfortunately, 36 years later the United States still faced the same concerns.

48. In 1960 the United States had not believed that a single standard of decolonization applied. It did not believe so now. Words like "subjugation", "domination" and "exploitation" did not capture the relationship between Member States that were responsible for the administration of Territories and the people of those Territories. Those words ignored the tremendous political, economic and social changes which the past 36 years had brought to the people of

those Territories. At the same time, it could not automatically be assumed that the goal of eradicating colonialism was relevant to most or all of the Territories that remained on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The United States had found from its experience as an administering Power that the people of the majority of those Territories understood that independence was not the only possible outcome of self-determination. They understood that their choices were not circumscribed by the three options set out in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960.

49. The United States had been encouraged by the words of the representatives of the Special Committee on decolonization at the beginning of the debate. They had spoken of the need to keep the Special Committee's programme of work under constant review and to consider new and pragmatic approaches to the issues facing that Committee. While some progress had been achieved in that direction, overall the resolutions and decisions presented by the Special Committee did not adequately reflect the reality in the Territories under consideration. In most cases, events had overtaken the Special Committee's work. The peoples of the majority of those Territories had exercised their right to self-determination by repeatedly electing Governments that supported the status quo. They had made a responsible choice through free and democratic processes. The resolutions and decisions adopted by the Special Committee should reflect that reality.

50. The result would be fewer Territories on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, an outcome which his country would welcome. In the interests of efficiency, in a spirit of reform, and without prejudice to the interests of the people of the Territories that would remain on the list, the Committee should consider whether to hear petitioners from those Territories directly. It should also consider how much longer it needed to continue operating through the filter of a Special Committee set up more than 30 years previously in circumstances that no longer existed. The Committee should not seek ways to prolong the existence of the Special Committee on decolonization once the immediate challenge of decolonization had been met, as had been suggested earlier in the debate. It was within the scope of the Committee to hear petitioners directly.

51. The peoples of a majority of the Non-Self-Governing Territories no longer viewed - if indeed they had ever viewed - the activities of foreign economic interests or the presence of military installations in their Territory as detrimental to their interests. Indeed, the socio-economic problems of those Territories were the same as those faced by small island States everywhere. They did not stem from a colonial past or present and could be addressed by the same mechanisms - United Nations or other - that were used to address socio-economic problems in the small island States. The resolutions dealing with those issues should be deferred since they bore no specific relationship to the work of the Committee and contained conclusions which were not supported by the facts.

52. His delegation recognized that United Nations visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories, carried out at an appropriate time and in consultation with the administering Power, were one method of ascertaining the situation in those Territories. The possibility of sending such missions should be kept under review, but during the current year the Special Committee had taken the unnecessary step of adopting a new resolution calling on administering

Powers to receive United Nations visiting missions in the Territories under their administration. That approach did not reflect the reality on the ground, which was that visiting missions were unnecessary in almost every case. In addition, the recommendations made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services after the 1995 seminar regarding the efficacy and value of holding such seminars away from Headquarters in New York needed to be taken into account. That practice entailed unnecessary expenditure and undermined the collective efforts of Member States to reform the United Nations.

53. His delegation was prepared to support resolutions and decisions that reflected the reality of 1996 without prejudice to the right of the United Nations to consider the situation in those Territories which remained a legitimate concern of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

54. The statement by the representative of Cuba had included some remarks about the colonial status of Puerto Rico; he wished to remind the Committee that the political status of Puerto Rico had been examined at repeated plebiscites, most recently in 1993. The results of those plebiscites had shown that there were few supporters of independence in Puerto Rico. The vast majority of Puerto Ricans supported the status quo, which meant that the issue had no bearing on the Committee's work.

55. Mr. FORERO (Colombia) said that the work done by the United Nations during its first 50 years had been of considerable assistance to a number of Member States in gaining their independence, but that did not mean that the Organization should rest on its laurels and discontinue its efforts in that direction. Its work in the field of decolonization should continue for as long as the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories needed it. All States were obliged to abide by the principles set forth in the Charter regarding the rights of peoples to self-determination. It was therefore extremely important to provide every assistance to the Special Committee in the discharge of its mandate. Cooperation between the administering Powers and the Committee was the most effective way of promoting the formation of realistic ideas about the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The contacts between the Special Committee and New Zealand were an example of such constructive dialogue.

56. It was important to ensure that the Non-Self-Governing Territories possessed the resources to achieve economic and social development on the basis of respect for their culture and the preservation of their environment. In that connection, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and the Heads of Delegations of the Non-Aligned Countries, at the Conference held recently in New York, had once again called on the international community to protect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories moving towards the attainment of self-determination, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and other relevant resolutions, and in particular, resolution 46/181, in which the General Assembly had adopted a plan of action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism; made an urgent appeal to the administering Powers to take appropriate measures to ensure political, constitutional, economic, social and educational progress for the inhabitants of those Territories; and urged the establishment of an effective mechanism for coordinating the activity of organs of the United Nations system and those of

the administering Powers. They had also reiterated that any attempt to undermine national unity and violate the territorial integrity of any country was incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

57. Mr. PÉREZ-GRIFFO (Spain), recalling the statement made to the Committee by Mr. Peter Caruana, Chief Minister of Gibraltar, said that his Government's position on the question of Gibraltar had not changed. It was well known to members of the Committee and had been reflected in the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain during the general debate and in his own statement to the Special Committee on decolonization.

58. In his statement, the Chief Minister had spoken of the wish of the people of Gibraltar to take part in the negotiating process and had pointed out that only the two sovereign States - Spain and the United Kingdom - were participating in the negotiations. The issue was how best to include the people of Gibraltar in such a framework. A reasonable formula had been elaborated in Brussels whereby the people of Gibraltar would have been allowed to attend the talks and take part in them. However, since Gibraltar could not be regarded as a sovereign State, its people could hardly discuss issues which were not within their sphere of competence. It was therefore necessary to reiterate that the local authorities in Gibraltar had excluded themselves from the negotiating process by attempting to impose on Spain elements of a political nature which lay outside their powers. Spain, however, felt a deep respect for the people of Gibraltar and it hoped that they would be able to join in the negotiating process at the earliest possible opportunity.

59. Mr. ARKWRIGHT (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom, which had 10 dependent Territories, remained firmly committed to the principle of self-determination, reflecting the wishes of the people concerned and exercised in accordance with the other principles and rights set out in the Charter of United Nations, as well as other treaty obligations. His delegation had listened with interest to the opening statement made by the Chairman of the Special Committee and had noted that Committee's emphasis on flexible, innovative and pragmatic solutions to the situation of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. He was therefore surprised that, despite some welcome changes to the texts of the resolutions and decisions before the Committee, many still contained language which suggested that the Special Committee was not prepared to accept the realities of the situation in the Territories and was unwilling to respond to the wishes of the people there.

60. The Chairman of the Special Committee had referred to the conclusions of the seminar held in Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea) which, in particular, acknowledged that political options other than independence were open to the Territories. His delegation continued to wait, with growing impatience, for the day when the Special Committee finally accepted that the vast majority of Territories under its purview were content with the status quo and with the level of self-government they had achieved, and that there was no need to inform them that they should throw off the so-called yoke of colonialism and alien subjugation.

61. The United Kingdom had a good record on decolonization and continued to take very seriously its obligations under the Charter in that connection. It regularly transmitted information on the Territories to the Special Committee, as required by Article 73 e of the Charter, and welcomed the fact that its efforts in that regard had been recognized in some of the resolutions put forward by the Special Committee. Within the constraints of treaty obligations, his country remained firmly committed to ensuring, in cooperation with the locally elected Governments, that the constitutional frameworks of its dependent Territories continued to meet the interests and wishes of their peoples. In each of the Territories, regular and free elections were held in which all parties were at liberty to advocate any constitutional proposals they wished. There was therefore no need for the Special Committee to request constitutional reviews or political education programmes or referendums designed to ascertain the views of the peoples of the British dependent territories. The United Kingdom was prepared to consider any proposals put forward by the people themselves.

62. The United Kingdom also took seriously its obligations in responding to the economic needs of its dependent Territories. The reasonable economic and financial needs of those Territories remained a priority in its aid programme. In that regard, despite some improvements, the content of the draft resolution submitted to the Committee on the question of foreign economic interests was once again disappointing in that it essentially ignored the benefits that foreign economic interests could bring to dependent Territories. Many elected Governments in the dependent Territories expended considerable efforts to attract foreign investment, recognizing the benefits it brought. The Special Committee should recognize the positive role of foreign investment, especially in small island States which had limited capital and few natural resources of their own. His delegation urged the Special Committee not to reject wholesale any amendments put forward by the European Union in an attempt to redress the bias in the draft resolution.

63. Mr. PHANIT (Thailand) said that, although there was no alternative, in the decolonization process, to the principle of the right to self-determination, there were some constructive options for the exercise of that right as identified in General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV), namely independent statehood, free association with an independent State, and integration with an independent State. Serious thought should be given to those alternatives in order to move things forward. In that connection, Thailand welcomed the positive developments in Tokelau, whose people favoured self-determination through free association with New Zealand. Apart from Tokelau, however, little progress towards self-determination and the eradication of colonialism had been achieved in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

64. One important factor in the success of the decolonization process was the attainment of self-sufficiency in terms of economic development; in that connection, assistance should be provided to the newly sovereign States by the United Nations, the administering Powers and other Member States. Through the Thai International Cooperation Programme, his country was ready to render assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories on request. The gathering of information on the political, economic and social situation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories was also very important for the success of the

decolonization process. In that connection, he regretted to note that not many visiting missions had been sent to the Territories for that purpose and that there were delays in the transmission of information by the administering Powers to the Secretary-General in accordance with Article 73 e of the Charter. In the age of modern communications technology, such delays were unacceptable. Nevertheless, Thailand firmly believed that all items on decolonization would be deleted from the agenda of the General Assembly by the year 2000, if not earlier.

65. Mr. HE Yafei (China) said that, during the remaining years of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, an undoubtedly arduous and pressing task had to be addressed, namely that of completing the process of decolonization, which would require vigorous efforts by the international community. In that connection, his Government maintained that: the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had an inalienable right to self-determination and independence on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations and of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV); that the provision of assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories in establishing a sound economic basis was an important element in the decolonization process; that no country had the right to station forces or establish military bases and installations in the Non-Self-Governing Territories; and that the dissemination of information on decolonization and enhanced understanding by the Special Committee of the living conditions and wishes of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories contributed to the attainment of the goals set forth in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Until such time as the great goal of decolonization had finally been attained, no reform of the United Nations should be allowed to divert attention from the question of decolonization.

66. Mr. KOLOI (Botswana) said that both parties to the conflict shared responsibility for the stalemate in the implementation of the Settlement Plan for Western Sahara. It would be in the best interests of both the Saharan people and the Kingdom of Morocco to resume the identification process immediately and complete it. Along with the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity was playing an important role in the Western Sahara peace process and Botswana hoped that it would continue to encourage accommodation between the parties. It was important for the parties to be satisfied at each stage that the identification process was free and fair. In that connection Botswana encouraged both the Frente POLISARIO and the Kingdom of Morocco to resort to dialogue, of whatever form, so that the identification process could be resumed.

67. Mr. SOAL (South Africa) said that his delegation remained disturbed at the ongoing impasse in the implementation of the settlement plan for Western Sahara and also at the reduction in the strength of the military component of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), and urged that nothing should be done that might be interpreted as a dwindling resolve by Member States to find a solution to the dispute. In that regard, it was heartening that the ceasefire was still holding as that would continue to serve as a basis to move the peace process forward. South Africa joined others in encouraging the Government of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to enter into high-level negotiations so as to pave the way for the resumption of the

identification process and the achievement of a final solution which would be acceptable to the international community.

68. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that any proposals under item 19 and proposals and amendments regarding the Special Committee's recommendations must be submitted no later than 4 p.m. on Wednesday, 16 October.

69. Mr. ARKWRIGHT (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that in his statement the representative of Uruguay had expressed the wish to find a solution with regard to the Falkland, South Georgia and South Sandwich islands. The United Kingdom's position was well known. It had been set forth by the United Kingdom delegation in exercise of the right of reply in the plenary session of the General Assembly in connection with the statement by the representative of Argentina on 24 September 1996.

70. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) recalled that the Secretariat had promised to reply to his inquiry.

71. Mr. KHAN (Secretary of the Committee) read out information provided by the Secretariat in response to the inquiry by the representative of Morocco, with appropriate explanations.

72. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) thanked the Committee secretariat for the information provided, and said that he wished to make two comments: first, his delegation was not able to obtain Security Council reports in the meeting room and had been forced to go to the documents distribution service for the necessary report, where it was not always possible to obtain reports straightaway. Second, the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/428) covered the period from 5 October 1995 to 30 September 1996. The Secretariat had indicated that it had begun with the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council of 24 November 1995 (S/1995/986), but the latest report (A/51/428) did not reproduce either the contents or the context of that document. In paragraph 2 of the report of 24 November 1995 (S/1995/986), it was noted that the basic obstacle to the completion of the identification process was the unwillingness of the Frente POLISARIO to participate in the identification of certain tribal groups and persons not resident in the Territory for which, in many cases, the Frente POLISARIO had no sheikh or alternate to propose. That paragraph was extremely important for Morocco, and was linked with paragraph 3 of the report of the Secretary-General of 27 September 1996 (A/51/428), which referred to the report of the Secretary-General of 8 September 1995 (S/1995/779) in which he had stated that MINURSO had an obligation to consider all applications that had been correctly submitted.

73. Thus, in his report to the Security Council of 8 September 1995 (S/1995/779), the Secretary-General had stressed that MINURSO had an obligation to consider all applications that had been correctly submitted, and had suggested to MINURSO that in circumstances where the Frente POLISARIO was unwilling or unable to make a sheikh available, identification should be based on documentary evidence. Paragraph 48 stressed that obligation of MINURSO. Meanwhile, the proposal made by the Secretary-General in paragraph 49 did not correspond to the second part, because of the lack of a link between the Secretary-General's September and November reports. In paragraph 49 it was

stated that technically, there would be no obstacle to organizing identification sessions in various places within or outside the Territory, wherever the bulk of the applicants resided. The practice could continue of calling on two tribal leaders (sheikhs) from the tribal subgroup concerned, but those would not invariably be drawn one from each side, as had been the practice up to then. Were identification to take place without their participation, it would be necessary, for the process to have credibility, to insist on the submission of documentary evidence, such as a birth certificate, to establish that the individual was indeed the child of a Saharan father, and some supporting evidence as to the father's birth in the Territory. The Frente POLISARIO would, of course, be invited to observe the proceedings.

74. The Security Council, in the preamble to resolution 1017 (1995) of 22 September 1995, had taken note of paragraph 49 of the Secretary-General's report of 8 September 1995 (S/1995/779). The draft resolution concerning the report of 24 November 1995 (S/1995/986), contained in document S/1995/1013 of 19 December 1995, came out in support of the Secretary-General's proposal in that report. He wished to know why that document had not been referred to since it was an official document of the Security Council. He also wished to receive clarification about why the summary of the memorandum from Morocco included in paragraph 31 of the report (A/51/428) referred to Morocco's willingness to cooperate, but made no mention of the problem of the responsibility of the Identification Commission and of the fact that the identification had been halted through no fault of Morocco's.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.